

18–24 Year Olds

During the mid-to-late 1990s, smoking prevalence of 18–24 year olds increased dramatically. Two reasons have been cited for the rise during this time period: 1) a high percentage of youths entering this age group were established smokers and 2) an increase in uptake of smoking by young adults.¹ The 2004 data indicate a decrease in 18–24 year old smoking rates. However, because of the small sample size of this age group in the survey, it remains to be seen if this is the beginning of a downward trend. Young adulthood is typically a period of “volatility” when major life events can increase the 18–24 year olds’ susceptibility to tobacco industry influences.^{2,3} This “volatility,” however, presents a unique opportunity to focus efforts on priming them for positive public health promotion activities.

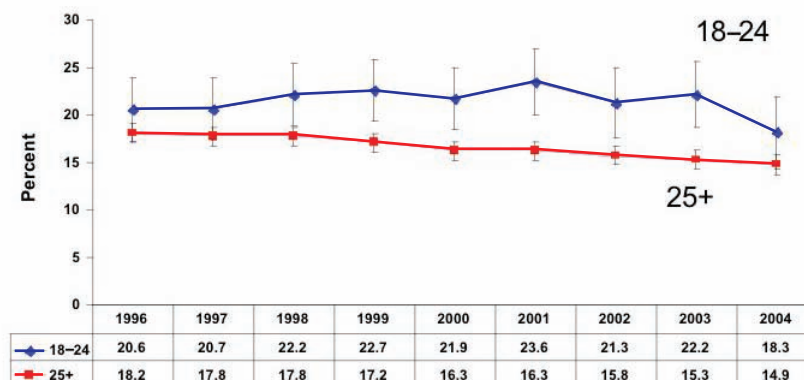
Smoking Prevalence

- The smoking prevalence in 2004 was 18.3%. Although the rate is a notable drop from the year before (22.2%), the decline is not statistically significant due to the small sample size.
- The 18–24 year old group continued to have the highest prevalence of any age group. The trend has remained consistent since 1996.
- As with all age groups, 18–24 year old men are more likely to smoke than women of the same age range.

Daily Smoking by Gender

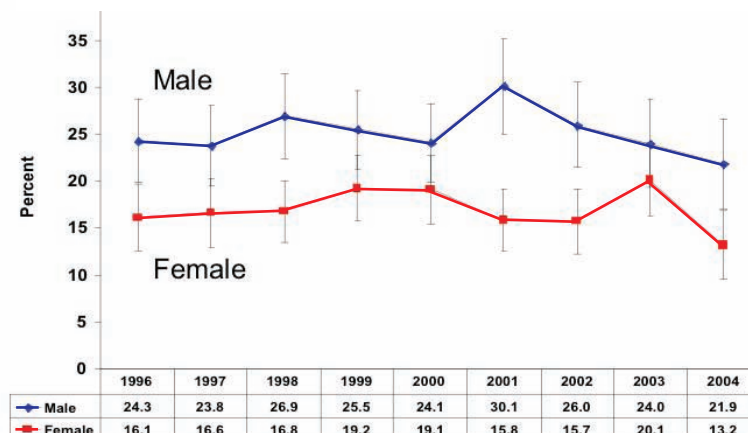
- The daily smoking prevalence for 18–24 year old men reached a high in 2001 and has decreased about 27% to a prevalence of 21.9% in 2004.
- Over the time span of 2000–2004, the daily smoking prevalence was more than 50% higher among 18–24 year old men than among 18–24 year old women.

Smoking Prevalence among 18–24 and 25+ Age Groups in California, 1996–2004



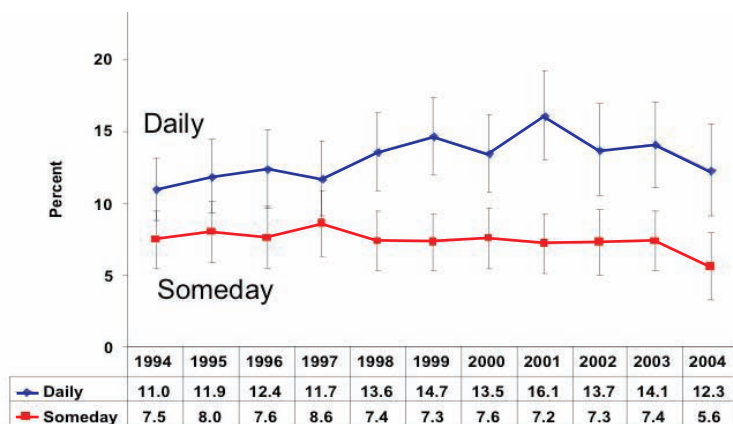
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) data is combined for 1996–2004. The data is weighted to the 1990 California population. Note that error bars represent the 95% confidence limits. Prepared by California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, April 2005.

Daily Smoking Prevalence among the 18–24 Year Age Group by Gender in California, 1996–2004



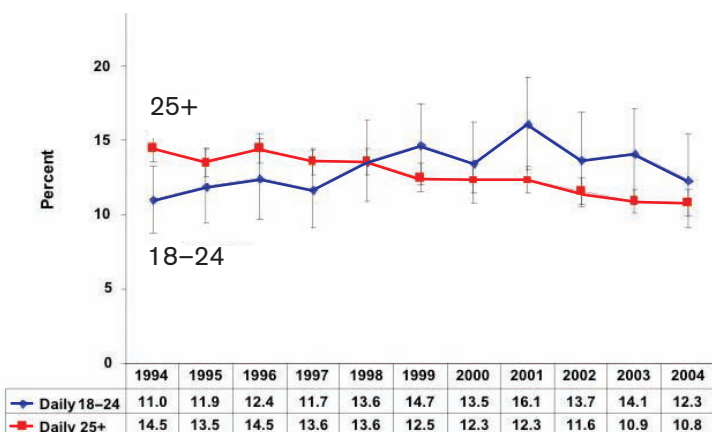
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) data is combined for 1996–2004. The data is weighted to the 1990 California population. Note that error bars represent the 95% confidence limits. Prepared by California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, April 2005.

Daily and Someday Smoking Prevalence among the 18–24 Year Age Group in California, 1994–2004



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) data is combined for 1994–2004. The data is weighted to the 1990 California population. Note that error bars represent the 95% confidence limits. Prepared by California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, April 2005.

Daily Smoking Prevalence among 18–24 and 25+ Age Groups in California, 1994–2004



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) data is combined for 1994–2004. The data is weighted to the 1990 California population. Note that error bars represent the 95% confidence limits. Prepared by California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, April 2005.

Daily and Someday Smoking in the 18–24 Year Old Group

- The daily smoking rate continues to be greater than the someday smoking rate among the 18–24 year old age group.
- Since 1994, someday smoking rates among 18–24 year olds fell within the 7.2% and 8.6% range until a non-significant decline in 2004 to 5.6%.

Daily Smoking 18–24 and 25+

- After a steady increase between 1994 and 2001, the daily smoking rate among the 18–24 year old age group diminished to 12.3% in 2004, approximately the rate seen in 1996.
- Daily smoking rates among the 18–24 year old group steadily increased between 1994 and 2001 to a high of 16.1%, but decreased by 24% between 2001 and 2004.
- The daily smoking rate among people age 25 years and older has gradually decreased by more than 25% since 1994.

About the Surveys

The *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System* (1984–present) and *The California Adult Tobacco Survey* (1993–present) are random digit-dial telephone surveys of approximately 8,000 adults conducted annually by the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) Unit of the Cancer Surveillance Section of the CDHS. Data have been weighted to the 1990 California population using gender, four races, and two age groups unless otherwise specified.

References

1. Lantz PM. Smoking on the rise among young adults: Implications for research and policy. *Tob Control*. 2003;12(suppl 1):i60–i70.
2. Schofield, PE, Borland R, Hill DJ, Pattison PE, Hibbert ME. Instability in smoking patterns among school leavers in Victoria, Australia. *Tob Control*. 1998;7:1499–55.
3. Gilpin EA; White MM, White VM, Distefan JM, Trinidad DR, James L, Lee L, Major J, Kealey S, Pierce JP. *Tobacco control successes in California: A focus on young people, results from the California tobacco surveys, 1990–2002*. La Jolla, CA: University of California, San Diego, 2004.

tCalifornia Department of Health Services
Tobacco Control Section
P.O. Box 997413 MS 7206
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413
www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco

November 2005

